

## **Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh**

### **Meetings and Events**

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 Sikh Council UK facilitated open Panthic meeting in partnership with the Federation of Sikh Organisations (FSO) and Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall to seek to achieve a consensus position regarding the British Sikh community's response to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to the UK next month. . A press release was issued detailing the discussions and outcomes of the meeting on 6th October. It was agreed to hold a follow-up meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> October. Senior members of Sikh Council UK including members of the Board of Jathedars appeared in several media to publicise the discussions and outcomes.

8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Representatives of Sikh Council UK attended a briefing entitled 'Safety & Security Briefing for Places of Worship' organised jointly by the London Boroughs Faith Network and Metropolitan Police and held at New Scotland Yard. This event allowed for representatives of Sikh Council UK to raise issues such as lack of engagement with the community by police at local and national level in identifying issues of concern and pro-active measures of safety.

17<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Executive Committee Meeting of Sikh Council UK took place at Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara Coventry, during which a report on the Sikh Council UK short term and long term priorities was presented and discussed. Executive Members indicated which of the 31 priority points which should be taken up in order of priority.

17<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Representatives of Sikh Council UK attended a reception at Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre Apsport House where, in an informal setting, representatives had the opportunity to highlight the work of Sikh Council UK and answer questions from participants.

24<sup>th</sup> October 2015 The General Assembly of Sikh Council UK took place at Amrit Parchar Dhamik Deevan Gurdwara Sahib Oldbury during which a report on the Sikh Council UK short term and long term priorities was presented and discussed. Members also discussed the Sikh Council UK position regards Sikh Council UK leading on pursuing dialogue as a strand of work with the Indian authorities.

24<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Sikh Council UK facilitated the follow-up open Panthic meeting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> October meeting. The strategy remained the same with detailed discussion taking place regarding the strand on pursuing dialogue being continued to be explored.

## **Media**

1 October 2015 Press Release issued - 'Turban law implemented'

1 October 2015 Press Release issued - 'Update: new law on Sikh turbans in the UK'

6 October 2015 Press Release issued - 'Sikh Council UK facilitates meeting to discuss community response to Narendra Modi's UK visit'

15 October 2015 Press Release issued - 'Sikh Council UK Condemns killings of Sikhs in Punjab and calls for independent investigation'

15 October 2015 Update issued to inform members of actions in relation to the situation in Punjab

A number of mainstream media outlets were contacted including BBC and ITV to express our concerns at the lack of coverage of the situation in Panjab. They were appraised through telephone discussions followed up by individual emails.

A letter was sent to ABP News TV channel raising our concerns about their offensive use of terminology in referring to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as a 'holy book'.

Sikh Council UK wrote to the Crown Prosecution Services regarding an article published in 'The Tribune' on 15 September 2015 which makes reference to The Crown Prosecution Service. Three organisations named in the article are affiliated member organisations of Sikh Council UK and all three are reputable organisations. We wrote to ascertain whether there is any truth in the claims made within the article in relation to the CPS.

## **Education:**

Key Stage 3 Religious Studies consultation. The Sikh Council UK Education sub-committee as part of its work is looking to prepare resources for use by schools at KS3 for the teaching of Sikhi as part of Religious Education courses. This will essentially be a web based resource with 'bite-sized' films on key issues relevant to the RE curriculum.

## **Campaigns**

Communication was maintained with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to ensure they were aware of the situation in Punjab and are closely monitoring it. Also contact was made with the Deputy British Consulate based in Chandigarh to once again express concerns with a request to monitor the developments and keep us updated from all perspectives.

Contact was made by Sikhs for Justice from USA who had initiated a submission to generate a high volume of requests to the United Nations at Geneva- Human Rights Special Procedures Branch to draw their attention to the recent killings at the hands of Indian Security Forces and urge them to carry out an independent visit to

Panjab to establish the facts of what is happening regarding Human Rights violations by the state.

Deregulation Act 2015: Sikh Council UK welcomed the coming into force of a change in the law giving Sikhs the right to wear turbans in place of safety helmets across workplaces in the United Kingdom. The Deregulation Act 2015 came into force on 1 October 2015 following a two year campaign by the Sikh Council UK which along with others successfully lobbied the British Government for a change in law to close the loophole which previously allowed employers in industries other than the construction industry to mandate turban wearing Sikhs to wear safety helmets.

### **Casework:**

Sikh Council UK was approached by a family who had been approved a Disabled Facilities Grant and required a letter of support as the mother (person with disability) has been using a downstairs room as a prayer room for over 15 years and was naturally not willing to allow for it to be converted into a bathroom as suggested by the local Council. Sikh Council UK provided a letter of support accordingly.

Kirpan case at College Academy in Hayes. Sikh Council UK liaised between parents and school in dealing with a Kirpan case where a young person was entering a UK school for the first time having migrated from Italy. The pupil was sent off premises on his first day. The school were initially adamant that there is no space for negotiation on the matter however they eventually agreed through much dialogue to review their current policies. A parent who had also had the same experience at a different school met with the school and offered a secure means of keeping it safely under garments. This was accepted and the child returned. A collective effort including Guru Nanak Academy confirming they allow Kirpans at their academy, Sikh Council UK and dedicated parents all paid off.